

### French fries stored safely at -21°C

Lutosa continues its integration: already the holder of the largest stock of potatoes in Europe, it is today opening one of the biggest automated coldstores in the world!



Leuze-en-Hainaut, 30 November 2004. At Lutosa, Belgium's number one potato processor, as much importance is attached to handling and storing the raw materials as it is to the finished products. This Tuesday, 30 November, the company, based in West Hainaut, is opening a 100% automated storage warehouse for frozen products with space for 46,578 pallets, all individually accessible.

This facility, which represents an investment of 25 million Euros, supplements a unit of 9 other coldstores that together can hold 36,000 pallets. The total storage capacity for frozen products is, therefore, 83,000 pallets.

It took 12 months for this 31m high, 12 storey building to be completed, which is a real achievement considering the scale of the work. The foundation slab, which is over 7,000 m<sup>3</sup> in volume, rests on some 1,628 bored piles at a depth of between 12 and 14 metres. The volume of the double-reinforced concrete apron is 3,555 m<sup>3</sup>. Finally, the shelves or pallet holders alone represent 2,304 tonnes of steel!

But once the building is erected, it still has to be maintained and kept running at a temperature of -21°C.

The main requirement is for the temperature to be kept constant, something that is not easy considering the hundred or so movements each hour (in and out). It is achieved by optimum sealing of the walls and insulation of the floor.



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In addition the area is cooled at night and weekends to keep energy bills as low as possible.

Safety and fire prevention aspects are another important element. A maximum 17% of oxygen is, therefore, tolerated in the air. This figure is achieved using a generator that releases nitrogen into the premises.

Finally, the management of this gigantic freezer is completely automated and radio-controlled by computers which provide total conformity with the stipulations of F.I.F.O. (First IN First OUT) and J.I.T. (Just In Time).

Fourteen people working in two shifts of 5 days take turns maintaining and running it.

The advantages of this new investment are numerous. "Now we no longer have to store some of our products in external coldstores. This means we not only save on storage costs but also transport costs, which is better for the environment too", states Guy Van den Broeke. "With this new system, we not only increase our autonomy and our flexibility but, in addition, offer our customers a more reliable stock control, and thus a more efficient and more profitable service".

But just as today Lutosa has increasing control downstream of its production, the same is true upstream, through equally advanced integration of the storage of its raw materials. Luc Van den Broeke explains: "Keeping potatoes properly requires a certain know-how, know-how that we pass on from one generation to another". He continues: "Keeping our own stock of potatoes also enables us to cope with sudden and speculative price rises and means we are able to supply our customers with a finished product of a consistent quality". This is how Lutosa has become the holder of the largest stock of potatoes in Europe, storing 100,000 tonnes of potatoes at its production sites.

Lutosa: a perfect example of an integrated company!